

EAST RENTON PLATEAU SURVEY RESULTS

BACKGROUND

In October and November of 2005, King County and the Four Creeks Unincorporated Area Council hosted three public meetings in the East Renton Plateau area, which falls in the City of Renton's Potential Annexation Area. The purpose of the meetings was threefold:

1. To provide information about annexation: what might change in the community if annexed to the City of Renton? What would remain the same?
2. To gather information about residents' concerns and issues related to annexation; and
3. To provide a forum for discussion of these issues among neighbors on the East Plateau.

To garner further feedback regarding resident opinions related to annexation, and to collect opinions from those unable to attend meetings, an informal survey was developed. This report contains the results of those surveys.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY/APPROACH

The survey was mailed out to all residents of the East Renton Plateau (4,392 copies mailed), and was also available at all three community meetings. The survey questions were as follows:

1. What local government services are most important to you? (Rank if you choose – 1 means most important.)

- Sidewalks/Streets/Roads
- Design/Zoning Standards
- How development is happening
- Permitting
- Police
- Parks/Recreation
- Economic Development
- Neighborhood Programs
- Fire and Emergency Medical Services
- Schools
- Library
- Water and Sewer
- Other

2. The Plateau has been experiencing a lot of development. What do you think about that?

3. Name your top 3 concerns about annexation.

4. If I had to choose today, I would:

- Stay Unincorporated
- Annex to Renton

SURVEY RESULTS

Caveats

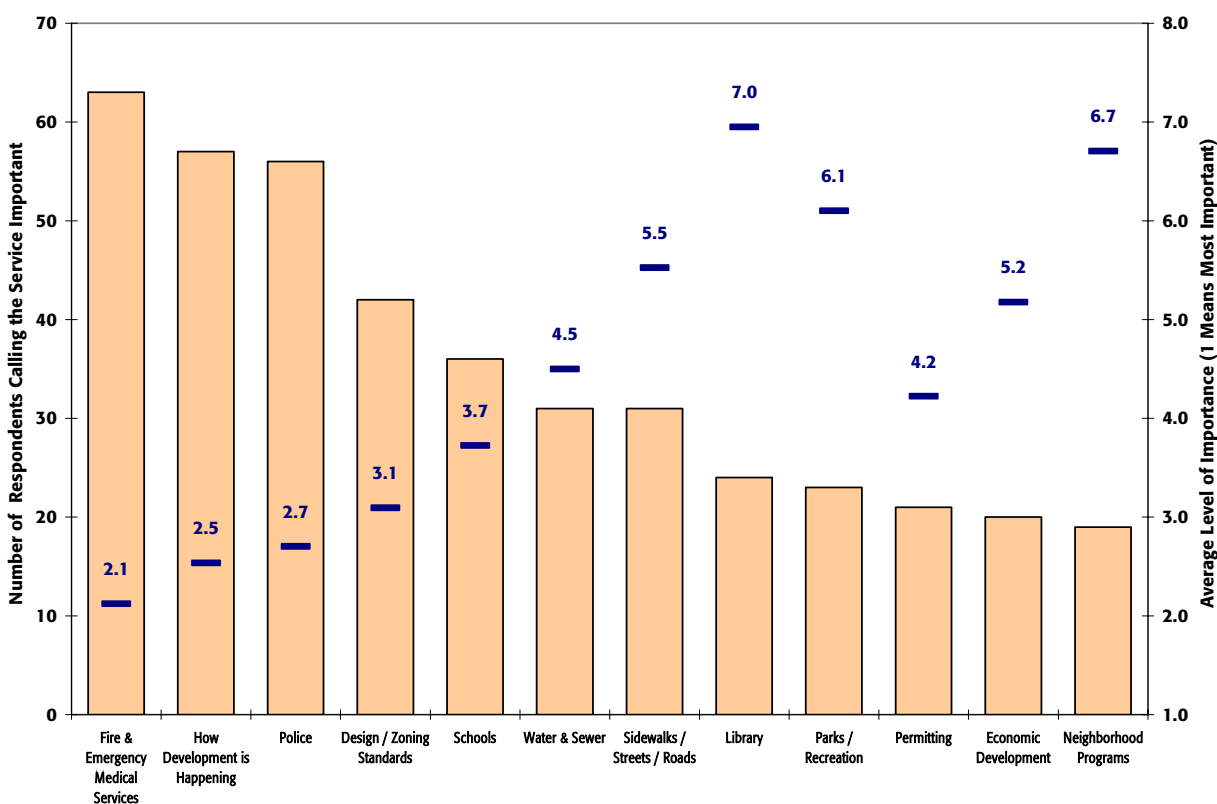
Statistical Significance. A total of 118 surveys were completed and turned in. The return rate on mailed surveys was 2.6%. Of the estimated 200 people attending the community meetings, only 18 completed surveys. As a result, the survey results are not statistically valid. The conclusions drawn from the surveys may or may not approximate results that would result from a broader, statistically valid sample of residents.

Survey Bias. The large majority of survey responses (84%) came from mail or e-mail. Many of those respondents may not have attended one of the community meetings at which annexation-related information was provided.

Question 1: What Local Services Are Most Important to Community Members?

In **Exhibit 1** below, the orange bars represent the number of people who identified that category as “important,” either by ranking it with a number or marking it with a check or “X”. The short blue horizontal lines represent the level of importance given to each category (lower numbers represent greater importance). Each blue line is the average ranking given by respondents who used numbers to rank levels of importance for that category. For instance, “Police” received 56 responses, and those responses had an average ranking of 2.7, indicating a relatively high ranking of importance.

Exhibit 1
Importance of Government Services to Community Members



Source: Berk & Associates, 2005

As the graph shows, there are four services that are noted frequently and given high importance by community members. Those four services, and their relative rankings are: (1) fire service; (2) development; (3) police service, and (4) design/zoning standards.

Question 2: The Plateau has been experiencing a lot of development. What do you think about that?

In nearly-unanimous fashion, community members dislike the recent development in the East Renton Plateau. Some blame King County, some blame the City of Renton, and some blame the developers, but nearly all respondents cite recent developments as unattractive. They use adjectives like "ugly," "boxy," "over-dense," and "poorly-planned" to describe the development, which they see as the antithesis of the lifestyle they sought when buying homes on the East Renton Plateau.

Question 3: What Are Community Members' Top Concerns About Annexation?

The areas of concern listed below represent opportunities for King County, the City of Renton, and the Unincorporated Area Council to provide more information and education.

Sewers. Respondents in general expressed a desire to maintain their current septic systems. They are concerned that under annexation, Renton will force them onto Renton's sewer system, increasing their costs with no appreciable change in service.

Taxes. Respondents expressed concerns that their tax burden would increase under annexation to Renton. Specific taxes mentioned included property taxes and utility taxes.

Dense Development. Significant concern was expressed that Renton would allow more dense development in the East Renton Plateau, which would lead to increased traffic, increased noise, and a loss of the rural lifestyle that many community members consider essential.

Again, these results suggest an educational opportunity. For example, the information provided at the community meetings set forth that sewer and septic regulations are not changed by annexation. Tax and fee data presented at the meetings showed that for over 99% of the tax parcels in the area, the combined tax and fee burden for the average household would drop slightly if the area annexed today. There were also extensive materials presented on the similarities and differences in city and county zoning and development codes, confirming that development on the East Renton plateau will continue under either scenario, but with regulatory differences.

Question 4: If Community Members Had to Choose Today, Would They Stay Unincorporated or Annex to Renton?

Exhibit 2 below shows that the majority of community members responding (74%) currently would choose to stay unincorporated. Of the community members responding to the survey who did attend one of the community meetings (a sample size of only 18), 44%, favor remaining unincorporated, with 28% still undecided.

Exhibit 2
Stay Unincorporated or Annex to Renton?

	Mail / E-Mail Responses		Responses from Meeting Comment Forms		Total	
	#	% of Total	#	% of Total	#	% of Total
Annex to Renton	15	16%	5	28%	20	18%
Stay Unincorporated	75	80%	8	44%	83	74%
No Response	4	4%	5	28%	9	8%
TOTAL	94		18		112	

Source: Berk & Associates, 2005